



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## SDDVA AT THE STATE FAIR

The annual "Salute To Veterans" served as the kick-off to this year's South Dakota State Fair in Huron.

South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg was the keynote speaker. SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock briefed the veterans on the state veterans cemetery and the Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication program.

The Chet Sorenson Veteran of the Year Award was presented to the wife of former Huron resident George Richard Ambrosius, who passed away earlier this year. His wife Karen accepted the award on his behalf.

SDDVA had a large booth set up in front of the grandstand for Veterans Day at the Fair, and also had a booth in the Expo Building Thursday through Monday. SDDVA's team of Secretary Whitlock, Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, Erin Brown, Kevin Bowen, Guy Arnold, Jerry Lemme and Brett Dickerson worked

the booth. This team of experts had the opportunity to visit with veterans about state and federal benefits,



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**be there.**

*Support Veterans this  
**Suicide Prevention Month.***

# POW/MIA RECOGNITION

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed Friday, Sept. 18, 2020, as "POW/MIA Recognition Day," calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who fought bravely for our freedoms.

"While we are grateful to all of those who have served our nation, this day is designated to remember and recognize the sacrifices endured by those members of the Armed Forces of the United States who were held as prisoners of war or remain missing in action," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Whitlock encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time Sept. 18th to honor the POW/MIA's who fought to protect our freedoms and lost theirs, as well as remember those engaged in today's struggle to guard our way of life for future generations.

"In their service to our country, former prisoners of war and those missing in action have sacrificed mightily to maintain the promise of liberty that we hold dear," said Whitlock. "POW/MIA Day affords all of us a great opportunity to reaffirm our vow to never forget the courage of our nation's staunchest defenders – our former POWs and MIAs. We owe them and their families our gratitude."

The state of South Dakota continues to support efforts to account for every service member classified as Missing in Action.

**RELENTLESS PURSUIT**

**A DETERMINED NATION**

**NATIONAL ★ POW/MIA ★ RECOGNITION DAY**

September 18, 2020

WWW.DPAA.MIL



# STIOUX FALLS AREA BUSINESSES COME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT HOMELESS VETERANS

A unique gift from Blue Collar Tactical and Project FUBM is transforming the way Volunteers of America, Dakotas serves veterans in need. The Sioux Falls businesses recently donated a trailer that the Volunteers of America, Dakotas - Veterans Services programs will use to bring supplies to veterans experiencing homelessness.

The trailer will be used to provide assistance to veterans experiencing homelessness, or at risk, by bringing services to the streets of Sioux Falls.

The idea started when Danielle Konechne and her team at Fisher Sisters Real Estate planned a drive, collecting cleaning and home supplies for Volunteers of America, Dakotas. The supply drive was a success, but it was clear there was more to be done after more conversations.

Paul Miller, Director of Veterans Services - Volunteers of America, Dakotas, brought forward the idea of a trailer and explained how a trailer would allow them to bring needed supplies to veterans on the street who are reluctant to come into the Veterans Services Center and ask for help.

“By bringing supplies to veterans in need, Volunteers of America, Dakotas staff could begin to build relationships with veterans and encourage them to come to the center for even more help,” said Miller.

Paul and Danielle began putting the pieces, and people, together to bring it to life. Through their efforts and various connections, they were introduced to David Hughes, owner of Blue Collar Tactical and the non-profit, Project FUBM. He jumped on the opportunity to bring this service to the homeless veterans in Sioux Falls.

“There are veterans in our community who sacrificed so much for our country and freedoms, and they are now sleeping in their car,” said Hughes. “Somewhere along the way, they got lost. We need to find them and let them know we see them, and that help is available.”



# THREE SDNG SOLDIERS NAMED TO NGB ALL GUARD ENDURANCE TEAM

South Dakota Army National Guard soldiers were named to the National Guard Bureau's inaugural All Guard Endurance Team after competing among 63 National Guard soldiers and airmen from nearly two dozen U.S. states and territories.

Sgt. 1st Class Paul Hoffman, Staff Sgt. Luke Scott and Spc. Bailey Ruff competed in the time trials at the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Nebraska, Aug. 29-30, to earn a spot on the 34-member team.

Ruff placed 3rd overall among the participants in the male category. The NGB team includes the top 20 males, top 10 females and top four masters qualifiers (individuals over age 50) from the competition.

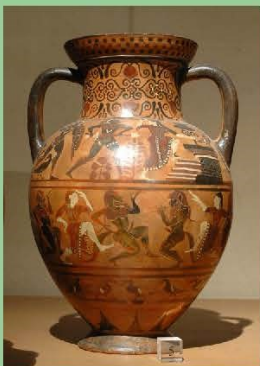
According to a press release from the Nebraska National Guard, the All Guard Endurance Team began as an idea to expand the existing National Guard Marathon Program, which promotes the Army and Air National Guard both locally and nationally while bolstering



the National Guard Retention Program by instilling physical fitness, self-discipline, and esprit de corps among National Guard members from all 50 states, three U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.

The competition included 13 different endurance challenges divided into four categories - DEKA Strong, the Army Combat Fitness Test, Obstacle Course Racing and distance running. The competitors covered more than seven miles of varying terrain throughout the challenges. The 13 challenges included: DEKA Strong; sand bag carry; knee tucks; obstacle gauntlet; t-pushups; ball toss; plate carry; tunnels; grenade throw; obstacle gauntlet II; deadlift; sprint, drag, carry; and a final run to the finish line.

All Guard Endurance Team members, Hoffman, Scott, and Ruff are now eligible to compete and represent the National Guard in approximately five endurance events annually.



## Sioux Falls Vet Center Outdoor Art Show

### Sioux Falls Vet Center

#### Sioux Falls Vet Center

3200 W. 49th St.  
Sioux Falls SD, 57106

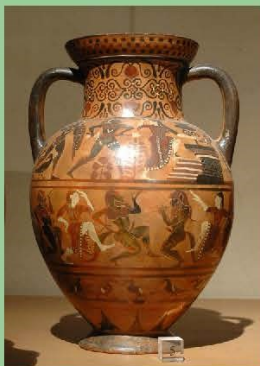
Phone: (605)330-4552

**The Sioux Falls Vet Center wants to see your art!  
Photographs, paintings, sketches, pottery, sculptures**

Please contact the Vet Center by

**Friday, Sep. 18th, 2020** if you wish to enter any  
works: **605-330-4552**

Please bring pieces for display to the Vet Center on  
**Monday, Sep. 21st, 2020 by 4PM** to ensure they are in-  
cluded in the display



**Tuesday, September 22, 2020**

**10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.**

**Sioux Falls Vet Center**

**3200 W 49th Street**

**Sioux Falls, SD 57106**

# Sioux Falls Vet Center Outdoor Art Show

**Sioux Falls Vet Center**

Be ready to enjoy the music, take in the art and engage  
with the community

Please wear masks and socially distance,  
Refreshments provided

## **Sioux Falls Vet Center**

3200 W. 49th St.  
Sioux Falls SD, 57106

Phone: (605)330-4552





# SECRETARY WILKIE JOINS BIPARTISAN GROUP OF SENATORS IN URGING HOUSE ACTION ON VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION LEGISLATION

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie released the following statement after a bipartisan group of more than 30 senators [called on House leaders to pass S. 785](#), the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act, which would expand mental health resources for veterans both inside and outside VA.

“The Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act is an honest and bipartisan solution to an issue that demands Congress’ immediate attention. The bill would boost care at VA facilities by expanding in-person and telehealth mental health services and allowing Guardsmen and Reservists to receive counseling at VA Vet Centers across the country. It would also expand the amount of non-VA community resources available to veterans, wherever they may live, a key component of President Trump’s [President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide](#) (PREVENTS) initiative. The bill passed the Senate unanimously and we call on the House to give it the timely attention and bipartisan support it deserves.” – Secretary Robert Wilkie

## PREVENTS

The President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans  
and End a National Tragedy of Suicide



### Purpose

The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) will focus on a holistic public health approach to suicide prevention. PREVENTS seeks to change the culture surrounding mental health and suicide prevention through enhanced community integration, prioritized research activities, and implementation strategies that emphasize improved overall health and well-being.

# NEW STUDY SHOWS VETERANS GIVE VA HIGH MARKS

A recently published study shows veterans receiving outpatient care from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facilities or community providers within VA's network are pleased with their experience overall.

The study, Veterans' Experiences with Outpatient Care: Comparing the Veterans Affairs System with Community-Based Care, compared survey responses from more than one million veterans who received outpatient care from VA facilities or private providers within VA's Choice Act network and found most rated their experiences highly.

The authors of the study, led by [Megan Van-neman](#), Ph.D., research scientist at VA Salt Lake City Health Care System's Informatics, Decision-Enhancement and Analytic Sciences Center, and the University of Utah School of Medicine, say the results are consistent with past studies showing where VA generally matches or outperforms care delivered in the private sector.

"Veterans now have increased options for where they get their medical care and the VA is working to ensure they have a positive experience regardless of where that care is delivered," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This study helps affirm the quality of VA care and also suggests community providers are doing a good job of meeting veterans' needs."

While the results of this survey analyzed veterans' experiences prior to the enactment of the [Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act](#) of 2018 (MISSION Act), the study authors say veteran-reported experiences of VA and community care continue to be important indicators of health care quality and merit attention from researchers.

Recently, a Veterans Signals [survey](#) found veterans' trust in VA at an all-time high. A Veterans of Foreign Wars [survey](#) of nearly 7,000 members found that more than 9 in 10 respondents would recommend VA care to other veterans. Studies in the medical literature have also validated VA's quality regarding [wait times](#) and overall excellence, including reports from outside organizations such as the [RAND Corporation](#) and [Dartmouth](#).

[Learn more](#) about accessing [VA health care](#) here.



**VA | MISSION Act**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Sep 11—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)  
Sep 12—SFC Richard Schild Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Yankton County Court House—10:00 am (CT)  
Sep 18—POW/MIA Day Ceremony—Veterans Memorial Park—Sioux Falls—6:30 pm (CT)  
Oct 3—SGT Allen Kokesh Jr. Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Yankton County Court House—1:00 pm (CT)  
Oct 10—LCPL Conrad Flyinghorse Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—McIntosh School Football Field—10:00 am (MT)  
Oct 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Sioux Falls  
Nov 11—SSG Jason W. Montefering and SGT Jeremiah Boehmer Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Parkston High School Auditorium—9:00 am (CT)  
Nov 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs VAMC—10:00 am (MT)  
Dec 1—Governor's State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)  
Jan 12—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)  
Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception



*Support Veterans this  
Suicide Prevention  
Month.*

**be there.**

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